



**DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

POSITION TITLE: Executive Director
STATUS: Full-Time, In-Person
REPORTS TO: Downtown Fort Wayne Board of Directors

ABOUT DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE

The Fort Wayne Downtown Improvement District (Downtown Fort Wayne) is a Business Improvement District established by Fort Wayne City Council under Indiana Statute IC 36-7-22-3, guided by a clear and ambitious mission: to advance Downtown Fort Wayne as the vibrant, urban core of northeast Indiana.

Since its founding in 1995, Downtown Fort Wayne has served as a catalyst for revitalization, investment, and connection in the heart of the city. As a quasi-governmental organization, Downtown Fort Wayne operates as a self-taxing district in which downtown property owners collectively invest in enhanced services that go beyond standard municipal offerings. These services—funded through a Downtown Improvement District assessment and strengthened by partnerships with the City, County, and community stakeholders—are designed to improve the business climate, elevate public spaces, and enhance quality of life for all who live, work, and visit downtown.

Downtown Fort Wayne’s work is rooted in the belief that a thriving downtown benefits the entire region. Through strategic investment and collaboration, the organization fosters a welcoming, safe, and vibrant environment where residents, businesses, property owners, and visitors feel connected to place and to one another.

A MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY AND VISION

Downtown Fort Wayne is in the midst of an exciting era of transformation. Riverfront development, a flourishing arts and culinary scene, and significant public and private investment have reshaped the city’s core and reinforced downtown’s role as a regional destination. In 2025, Downtown Fort Wayne reached a major milestone with its successful reauthorization for another ten years and a 42% expansion of the district, extending its reach and impact while strengthening connections between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

This pivotal moment presents Downtown Fort Wayne with an opportunity to reimagine its mission, expand its scope, and strengthen its organizational and financial foundation. Collaboration will be essential to success, and Downtown Fort Wayne seeks an Executive Director who can lead with

vision, build meaningful partnerships, and connect residents, property owners, businesses, and public leaders around a shared future for downtown.

With an annual budget of approximately \$1.5 million and a dedicated team of 12–15 staff members across administrative and field operations, Downtown Fort Wayne delivers essential services, manages strategic initiatives, and supports a vibrant, clean, and safe downtown environment across a growing district footprint.

POSITION OVERVIEW

The Downtown Fort Wayne Board of Directors seeks a visionary, dynamic, and highly capable leader to serve as Executive Director. The ideal candidate will be someone who can build on the strong organizational foundation that has been established and take the organization to the next level of impact.

This individual should bring:

- A strong understanding of downtown development, business or economic improvement districts, and civic partnerships.
- Experience working with municipalities, elected officials, commercial and residential building owners and operators, as well as private sector business owners.
- A proven ability to build and restructure teams and strengthen organizational capacity.
- An entrepreneurial mindset and a passion for community transformation.

The Executive Director will report to the Board of Directors and be accountable to the district's property owners, while also serving as a trusted partner, advocate, and liaison to the City of Fort Wayne and key community stakeholders.

The role requires frequent engagement with City and County leadership, council members, developers, business owners, residents, and institutional partners. The Executive Director must be an articulate advocate, an inspiring leader, and a creative problem-solver ready to make Downtown Fort Wayne a model for urban development and revitalization.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Organizational Leadership & Administration

- The Executive Director will be the chief executive and also manage the daily operations of the Downtown Fort Wayne DID (managed as a 501(c)(6)) as well as Art this Way, Inc. (ATW) which is a 501(c)(3) organization focused on public art and related events.
- The Executive Director will be responsible for handling oversight of, and participating in, all day to day operations, organizational policies, agreements, budgets and operating structures. Existing policies (including organizational bylaws) should be revisited and – where identified – new policies should be adopted to ensure operational transparency and efficiency.
- The Executive Director will lead organizational restructuring and staff development to ensure operational excellence and accountability. They will also oversee staff performance and professional growth, fostering a collaborative, high-performing culture.
- The Executive Director will oversee all planning and budgeting, guided by stakeholder input and the Downtown Fort Wayne Board of Directors. This includes developing annual budgets and work plans, as well as developing multi-year plans and priorities for Downtown Fort Wayne.

- The Executive Director will be responsible for facilitating and publicly noticing monthly board meetings, and developing board meeting agendas and materials in coordination with the Downtown Fort Wayne Board Chair. They will also be responsible for ensuring accurate board meeting minutes are collected, approved and posted in a timely manner. Additionally, the Executive Director will maintain regular communications with the Board of Directors and respond in a timely manner to requests for information and/or updates on all Downtown Fort Wayne matters.
- The Executive Director will be responsible for ensuring board members are provided guidance on their roles and responsibilities as special district board members. This will include identifying/recruiting new board members and fostering engagement and participation of board members.
- The Executive Director must exhibit excellent communication and diplomacy skills to gain the confidence of stakeholders, the city manager, elected officials, city staff, vendors, contractors, and other community partner organizations.
- The Executive Director must act as a spokesperson for Downtown Fort Wayne on official statements and represent Downtown Fort Wayne at appropriate meetings, functions and ceremonies. They must also attend annual conferences, seminars, City Council meetings and other events as designated by the Board of Directors.
- The Executive Director will maintain strong working relationships and partnerships with the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County, including oversight of city and county contracts and agreements that support the work of the organization.
- The Executive Director will partner with other community organizations aligned with the organizations work, including but not limited to Visit Fort Wayne, Greater Fort Wayne and the Grand Wayne Center.

Financial Management & Fiscal Oversight

- The Executive Director will oversee the financial management of Downtown Fort Wayne and ATW under the direction of the Board of Directors and the Treasurer, ensuring spending is within approved budget levels. This includes developing and/or modifying financial protocols to ensure transparency, accountability, and proper internal controls are in place.
- The Executive Director will be responsible for preparing the annual DID budget and work plan, in partnership with the Board of Directors and reflecting the priorities of stakeholders/ratepayers.
- The Executive Director will oversee all invoicing, bill payment, and financial reporting, including clear and comprehensive financial statements for DID monthly meetings and annual reporting. They will also oversee organizational financial audits.
- The Executive Director will identify opportunities to leverage external funding, partnerships and sponsorships for greater impact and revenue generation and will develop and maintain relationships with those external funding sources.
- The Executive Director will have a working understanding of financial management and reporting.

Stakeholder Management

- The Executive Director shall ensure that a contact database of property and business owners is kept up to date at all times.

- The Executive Director shall make a concerted effort to get to know all district stakeholders/ratepayers and provide opportunities for open communication.
- The Executive Director shall ensure regular (at minimum, quarterly) stakeholder/ratepayer meetings that provide transparent opportunities for feedback on the work of Downtown Fort Wayne.
- The Executive Director shall oversee preparation of communication materials for newsletters, website content, and email/printed correspondence.
- The Executive Director shall ensure there are procedures and processes in place to allow stakeholders/ratepayers to provide feedback and will report periodically to the Board of Directors on any feedback received.

PROGRAM OF WORK — DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

- The Executive Director will be responsible for providing guidance to the Board of Directors as to the best methods to meet goals and objectives, including staffing needs, roles, responsibilities, and when contracted support is a better utilization of funds.
- The Executive Director shall have experience and knowledge of implementing similar programs and projects like:
 - Delivering on a clean and well-maintained Downtown Fort Wayne, including through its Clean and Safe Program, which involves identifying priority areas for service delivery, frequencies, best models to deliver and more.
 - Delivering on a safe downtown including working with stakeholders and the Fort Wayne Police Department and leading periodic meetings of the Downtown Fort Wayne Safety Committee to determine the best delivery models and approaches to ensure everyone feels comfortable throughout the district.
 - Guiding and managing streetscape and placemaking investments within the District that further the Downtown Fort Wayne identity and ensure connectivity, while also addressing issues that negatively impact Downtown Fort Wayne stakeholders. This includes working with, and advocating to, City and County agencies and/or other funding partners on potential infrastructure improvements within the District.
 - Business support, development, and marketing to ensure businesses can thrive within the district.
 - Developing strategies that align with Downtown Fort Wayne’s public art initiatives and growing the ATW program.
 - Oversee methods of tracking economic indicators that help business owners and that allow Downtown Fort Wayne to demonstrate the impact of its programs, including utilization of tools like Placer AI.
 - Effective district marketing and communication strategies that increase DID stakeholder revenues, generate awareness of businesses and drive consumers to increase spend throughout the district.
 - Develop and create events, both existing and new, including establishing programming that activate different parts of Downtown for different audiences, drawing new audiences from surrounding communities in the region, and ensuring the events are impactful for stakeholders/ratepayers.
 - General advocacy around all issues impacting the district now and in the future, including staying well informed on policy tools, zoning changes, planned development activity, etc.
 - Participate in the development and implementation of the Downtown Fort Wayne Strategic Plan in conjunction with the City of Fort Wayne.

EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, SKILLS

The ideal candidate for the Executive Director position will possess the following:

- Knowledge and familiarity of Fort Wayne and how to successfully position it against competitive destinations.
- Experience leading or serving in a higher-level role with another business improvement district or a knowledge and familiarity with the operations and purpose of business improvement districts.
- Understanding of and experience with delivering cleaning and safety programs in a district.
- Understanding of public infrastructure operations, funding, and ability to engage with potential funding partners on public right-of-way improvements within the district.
- Experience developing and supporting district businesses with programs and initiatives that support economic development and business growth.
- Ability to analyze, interpret, and synthesize data in order to translate that information into an easy-to-understand written and oral format.
- Strong organizational and time management skills; demonstrated ability to manage multiple projects successfully with minimal supervision. Being a self-starter is a desired skill.
- Demonstrated ability to successfully manage, mentor, and lead a team.
- Exceptional oral presentation skills, written and verbal communication skills, and research skills.
- High attention to detail, accurate documentation, and follow-through.
- Ability to be tactful, courteous, and display an appropriate public image when representing the organization.
- Willingness to work flexible hours to meet the unique needs of Downtown Fort Wayne. It is anticipated that work hours will vary and may require evenings and weekends at times.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree in business, public administration, urban planning, marketing, or a related field, or equivalent relevant work experience.
- Minimum of five years of progressive leadership experience in economic development, downtown management, or a similar field.
- Demonstrated success managing staff, budgets, and strategic initiatives, while also directly participating in the operations of the organization.
- Experience leading development, fundraising or other sponsorship efforts.
- Proven ability to build relationships with government, civic, and private partners.
- Strong public speaking, writing, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Creative, entrepreneurial thinker who thrives in a fast-moving, transformative environment.

PERSONAL TRAITS

- Dynamic, visionary and entrepreneurial—excited by the opportunity to shape a district's future.
- Politically astute, with the ability to navigate civic and institutional partnerships.
- Strategic and data-driven, yet creative and people-oriented.
- Self-motivated, decisive, and results-oriented.
- Passionate about community, placemaking, and urban revitalization.
- Flexible and adaptable; self-aware and responsive to feedback.

COMPENSATION

A competitive salary in the range of \$100,000-\$125,000 commensurate with experience will be offered. A benefits package including health, dental, vision, and retirement contributions is also included.

TO APPLY

For confidential consideration, please submit a cover letter and resume to Tom Ludwiski at DTFWjobs@gmail.com.